

## Culture and Child Maltreatment Challenges for Child Health Services



**Dr Shanti Raman**  
Sydney South West Area  
Health Service



**Dr Deborah Hodes**  
Camden PCT and University  
College Hospital London

## PLAN



- Conceptualising Culture
- Definitions
- Cultural issues in parenting/ child development
- Child Maltreatment
- Culturally competent services
- Case studies
- Discussion

## Framework in UK and Australia

UK	Australia
UNCRC	UNCRC
BEM	Multicultural
Children's Act 1989 & 2003	State based legislations: <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> <i>Children Legislation Amendment 2009</i>
DH guidance: <i>Assessing black children in need and their families</i>	Cultural Competence in Health
RCPCH: <i>Child Protection Reader</i> <i>Child Rights Advocacy</i>	RACP: <i>Child Protection Policy</i> <i>Health of children in OOHC</i> <i>Cultural Competence</i>

## Culture

A way of life; the blueprint for living which guides thoughts, feelings and actions, and which assists individuals to identify with others who share a similar way of life.

### Culture (Frisby, 1992)

- Customs, traditions, values, attitudes
- Significant artistic/scientific achievement
- As values, norms of the immediate context
- Refers to superficial differences between macro and micro groups (ie clothing, music, speech)
- Refers to outer appearance ("culturally different")
- "Race consciousness"

## Definitions

- Ethnicity: ethnic self-identity  
ascribed ethnic identity  
cultural identity  
racial identity  
nationality  
descent
- Race: classifies on basis of geography and physical characteristics
- Cultural identity: diversity and pluralism

Helms J, 1997,  
Bhugra 1999

## Categories of Acculturation

- Mainstreamers /assimilation
- Bi-cultural individuals
- Culturally different individuals
- Culturally marginal individuals

John Berry 1988

## Cultural Issues in Child Rearing and Child Development

It is known that childrearing practices influence the rate and expression of children's development

### Parenting is a universal, *but* highly variable behaviour ... Cultural Differences in Skill and Behaviour

- Early motor development
- Obedience
- Toilet training
- Verbal Skills
- Temperament
- Feeding
- Crying
- Independence
- Learning
- Sleeping

### Cultural differences in Parental Goals

- **Pedagogic:** major goals are for children to learn to feel emotionally independent from their parents and to develop interactive and language skills
- **Child-centred:** a model in which the most important goal is protecting the health and survival of the infant

Hallmark study: Le Vine et al 1994, *Child care and culture: Lessons from Africa.*

### Pedagogic Model



### Child-Centred Model



## Pedagogic versus Child-Centred

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • lack of co-sleeping                      | • co-sleeping and breastfeeding on demand |
| • relatively tolerant of other separations | • respond rapidly to crying               |
| • ↑ emphasis on verbal interaction,        | • ↑ physical contact                      |
| • ↓ emphasis on physical contact           | • ↓ verbal interaction                    |

### **Cultural differences in Goals of Development**

- Career success, marriage, house, car, TV
- Achieving full tribal status
- Children better off than parents, security, pride in children's success
- Factors influencing
  - Parents own status
  - Migration story: refugee, economic, push/pull factors
  - Religious affiliations
  - Political environment
  - Gender

### **Defining Child Abuse**

- ?Universal
  - Occurs everywhere
  - Mainly studied in Western societies
- ?Culture Specific
  - No community that sanctions child sexual abuse
  - Problematic definitions of physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse

### **Culturally Responsive Definitions of CA**

Korbin 1991

- Acknowledgement of cultural differences in child rearing practices
- Deviations from cult appropriate child rearing of any cultural gp are considered abusive by that gp
- Circumstances where societal harm undermines children's wellbeing beyond the control of the parent (eg poverty)

### **UNCRC – Article 24**

Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children

### **Cultural norm or maltreatment**

- Definitions not clear but in practice what happens is:
- Over-diagnose – e.g. cases and not understanding culture
- Under-diagnose – barriers as listed next

### **Barriers**

- 'Too hard', 'don't go there'
- Culture used as excuse
- Ignoring cultural contribution in diagnosis
- Cultural differences in child rearing
- Lack of cultural sensitivity
- Fear of being labelled racist
- Lack of training opportunities

## Continuum of cultural practices

Koramoa 2002

Practice	Response	Example
Beneficial	promote	Breast feeding Showing respect
Neutral	respect	Threaded beads Co-sleeping
Potentially harmful	educate	Inner cleansing Circumcision
Harmful	prevent	Chilli in vagina Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Honour killings

## Cultural Competency: ? Necessary

- Understand concept of culture and its influence
- Open and willing to explore own cultural bias
- Open and willing to explore from another's perspective
- Identify useful and culturally appropriate strategies for working with diversity

## Cultural Competence Model



Source: Research and consultation report commissioned for this project (see Appendix B)

## Action at Individual Level

- Develop optimum knowledge, attitudes, behaviours re cultural competency
- Are supported to work with diverse communities
- Develop relevant, appropriate, sustainable interventions

## Action at Professional Level

- Makes cultural competency part of education & professional development
- Professions develop cultural competence standards
- Guidance provided for working lives of individuals

## Organisational level



- Cultural competency valued, integral to core business, supported and evaluated
- Skills and resources to support diverse clients are in place
- Management committed to diversity management & training

## Case Management

- Consider the following factors in deciding on the influence of culture on the actual or suspected maltreatment

## Conclusions

- Acknowledge culture in context (“unpack”)
- Incorporate culture in research and audit
- Develop culturally competent services that respect cultural/ biological variations in
  - family/community
  - parenting/child rearing
  - child development

## Child

## Healthy child development

Is the physical health impaired?

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) - complications
- Toileting – developmental milestones

## Healthy child development

Is the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the child impaired?

- Romanian orphanages - Cognitive attainment, attachment
- Scapegoating – low self esteem, deliberate self -harm

## Effect on the child

What is the child's opinion on the following?

- Degree of severity
- Consequences
- Meaning

## Parent

## Basic care

Is the parent providing the following?

- Food, warmth, shelter
- Maintenance of physical health
- Protection from violence and abuse
- Emotional responsiveness
- Access to education and opportunities for socialisation

## Parents view

What influence have the following?

- Own history
- Value child, beliefs, expectations
- Interpretation of culture
- Child rearing practices

## Parents view of the value of the child

Do any of the following influence the value of the child to the parents?

- Economic contribution
- Family lines
- Pleasure
- Health & disability
- Gender
- Temperament
- Unwanted

## Parental responsibility

Is the parent fulfilling their responsibilities?

- all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that by law the parent of a child has in relation to that child.
- the legal emphasis is on responsibility

## Professional & society

## Professional view

- Is the professional influenced by the following?
- Own culture
- Parent's culture
- Professional body
- Society

"if Victoria had been a white child would she have been treated differently?" Victoria Climbié Inquiry 2003